

Thursday 19th November

Numbers 14: 10-25

Key verse 14:19

*In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now.*

In these verses we learn good lessons on prayer. God is ready to wipe the rebellious people out with a plague but Moses, the ever caring leader of the same people, pleads with God. Moses had an intimate knowledge of God and was confident to appeal to him on 4 points.

- His reputation. Moses declares to God that if he were to kill the Israelites, that people would either think God was incompetent or just malicious. Moses knew neither was true. The surrounding nations were beginning to see the power of God and his dedication to his people!
- His character. (v17-19) Moses already knew about the nature of God was from the incident of the Golden Calf and his subsequent meeting with God on Mt Sinai. God hid Moses in a cleft then spoke of his own character. Read Ex 34:6-7 and remember this was God speaking about himself. Moses repeats God's own words back to him in v17.
- His promise. (v16) Moses is incredibly bold here! Basically he says to God, 'Don't forget you promised, on oath, to bring these people into the promised land but now you're going to break your promise and slaughter them in the desert.' It would be understandable for Moses to think, 'If you break this promise, how do I know you won't again?'

(Interesting to note here that God actually did bring them to the promised land. They chose not to go in. God always allows us free will!)

- His covenant. (v19) Moses declares that these were the people he had pardoned and forgiven since they left Egypt. It echoes what he says in Dt. 9:26 and seems to be saying, 'You made a covenant to save them from Egypt, why kill them now?'

Do you, like me, have a nagging question about this episode? Did Moses change God's mind? Were God's plans flawed all along?

This is a much debated topic but Numbers 23:19 tells us that, 'God is not a man...that he should change his mind.' God's wisdom is beyond our understanding and he is perfect in every way but somehow prayers from us mere mortals are important to God in carrying out his will!

Like Moses, our prayers should be aligned with what matters to God. We should appeal to him to act to bring glory to his name, to act consistently with his character and in accordance with his promises.